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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Washington, D.C. 20520

November 29, 1978

MEMORANDUM TO: M/MO - Miss Joan M. Clark

FROM: CA/OCS - Alan A. Gise

SUBJECT: Funding and Legal Problems Involved in Disposition of Unclaimed Remains at Dover AFB.

Although the FBI team at Dover is just now fully geared up to start verification of identity of remains at Dover AFB, it has been estimated that there may be 200 to 250 bodies which cannot be definitely identified. I have been advised that DOD does not have the authority to dispose of these remains and that in effect we are the custodians and responsible for disposition. However, State does not have the necessary authority or funds. The cost of disposing of these remains may well be anywhere from $1,000 to $1,500 each. Even if cremation is chosen some states, including Delaware, require that a vault for the ashes be purchased thereby narrowing the difference in cost between interment and cremation.

To further complicate the problem there seems to be a growing public feeling in Delaware that none of the victims of Jonestown should be buried in Delaware particularly not in any one location. The fear has been expressed that such a "mass" grave would serve as a drawing point for annual or periodic meetings of the Peoples Temple or other "undesirable" cults or groups. This opinion has been expressed by local Delaware officials, by a Delaware State Representative and by the Mayor of Dover on a local radio station. In addition, Delaware officials charged with the responsibility of providing burial permits are creating road blocks that would make it legally impossible to dispose of the remains in Delaware. Our liaison officer at Dover has discussed this problem with Bob Dalton in L and the Legal Adviser's Office is prepared to make representations to the Governor's Office.

[illegible] A/CDC/MR

DATE

[illegible] DATE

[illegible]

EXDOSE EXEMPTIONS [illegible]

DECLASSIFIED [illegible] RELEASABLE

RELEASE DENIED

PA or FOI EXEMPTIONS

In regard to this public fear of a survivors' mass grave, San Francisco police and other officials have expressed a similar concern particularly in regard to clashing demonstrations between Temple members and next of kin of those who died in Jonestown. In effect we might find ourselves with no choice but to seek a waiver from the Secretary of Defense to permit a military cemetary to be used for temporary interment until authority and funds are obtained to make final disposition of the remains. I believe we would have a public relations problem if we precipitously attempted cremation or burial at sea of unidentified bodies.

cc: CA - Miss Watson
CA/EX - Mr. Somerville
M - Mr. Richard W. Murray
L/CA - Mr. Robert E. Dalton
ARA - Mr. John Bushnell
ARA/EX - Mr. William D. Calderhead